



Department of Health

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Flu Prevention in the Workplace

All employees should be familiar with simple measures to reduce the risk of influenza-like illness in the workplace and practice good hygiene.

Seasonal and H1N1 Flu

Seasonal influenza (flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. H1N1, also called swine flu, is a new flu virus that emerged in April 2009. Most people do not have any immunity to this new virus. H1N1 can spread quickly and infect many people at the same time. Both H1N1 and seasonal flu are expected to circulate during the 2009 – 2010 flu season. Most people that get sick with seasonal flu or H1N1 experience mild illness and will recover without needing medical care or antiviral medications.

Symptoms of the flu

Symptoms of seasonal flu and H1N1 are similar and include a fever plus cough or sore throat. Flu symptoms can also include a runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea or vomiting.

Here is what you can do to stay healthy in the workplace:

1. **Practice good personal hygiene.** Good hand hygiene should always be practiced after contact with frequently-touched surfaces or other people's hands.
 - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough and sneeze into your upper sleeve.
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
 - After coughing or sneezing, wash your hands.
 - Use alcohol-based hand gels if soap and water are not available.
 - Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes, as germs spread this way.
2. **Keep your work areas clean.**
 - Make sure to dispose of tissues in trash receptacles.
 - Try to avoid using other employee's phones, desks and office equipment, if possible.
3. **Stay home if you are sick.** One of the best ways to reduce the spread of the flu is to keep sick people away from well people. If you have influenza-like illness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home from work until you are fever-free (temperature less than 100.4°F/38°C) for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. If you are sick, be sure to rest, drink plenty of fluids, and avoid using alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco. Check with your doctor if you are experiencing flu like symptoms and you are at high risk of flu-related complications.

4. **Get vaccinated against H1N1 flu once the vaccine becomes available to you.**

Vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu and avoid spreading it to others at high risk of flu-related complications. The H1N1 vaccine is just as safe as the seasonal flu vaccine, which millions of people receive every year.

5. **Resources**

For more information:

- HEALTH at <http://www.health.ri.gov>
- H1N1 Information Line (M-F 8:30am- 4:30pm) 401-222-8022
- H1N1 email address h1n1@health.ri.gov
- Flu.gov website, <http://www.flu.gov>
- Follow us on Twitter: RIDEPTOFHEALTH
- Workplace posters can be found here:
<http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/prevention/>